Amazigh culture and media: Migration and identity in songs, films and websites
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Chapter I: ‘Come Back My Son’: History and Uncertainty

Come back my son
Come back my dear
Oh mother, *aqq-ayi da* [I am fixed here] in Rumi’s land
I saw misery in my land
I saw hardship and suffering
I saw hardship and suffering
Come back my son
Come back my dear
Oh mother, I cannot return to the graveyard
*Aqq-ayi da* in Germany, in bars drinking whisky
I am married to *ṯaṛumešt*, with whom I got children
I am married to *ṯaṛumešt*, with whom I got children
Come back my son
Come back my dear
Mother *aqq-ayi da* a stranger
The departure from my homeland (entered in my bones) broke my heart
Oh Mother! Reckon me a loser
Mother! Reckon me a loser
Come back my son
Come back my dear
[The mother crying:] *Aaaah, Aaaah, Aaaah, Aaaah*
Come back to your land to fight alongside your brothers
Come back to your land to get your share. (Elwalid, ‘A dwer-d’; my trans.)

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1 *Rumi*: the word is derived from the word Roman and it is used in North Africa as a synonym for a European or westerner.
2 *Ṯaṛumešt* or *romia*: refers to a female *Rumi*.
3 One can listen to ‘Come Back My Son’ and all revolutionary songs listed in this chapter online. Visit the website www.Agraw.com, select ‘Rif Music’ from the menu, then select the singer from the list.
Introduction

In this chapter I study the song ‘A ḏwer-d a mmi-nu’ (‘Come Back My Son’), which is found on Elwalid Mimoun’s first album Ajjaj (Lightening, 1980). His second album, entitled Ametlue (Vagabond), and his last album, Tayyut (Fog), were released in 1986 and 1996, respectively. Elwalid Mimoun addresses various subjects in each of the three albums, like Moroccan-regime oppression of Riffian Imazighen (such as in the song ‘Ajjaj’), Amazigh women’s rights (notably, ‘Teqqim x ij n weẓ ru’ ['She Sat on Rock']), the phenomenon of migration (such as with ‘Ametlue’ and ‘Taḏbirṭ’ ['Pigeon']), and, as in ‘Aqbuš’ ('Water Jar'), aspects of the Amazigh culture.

Elwalid Mimoun was born in 1959 in the village of Ait Sidel in the suburbs of Nador in northern Morocco (or what is known as the Rif area). He began his career as an artist in the 70s when he was still a young student. Many of his songs, which are inspired by his surroundings, not only highlight the daily life of Imazighen in the Rif region but also of those living throughout Amazigh diaspora. In fact, Elwalid is considered one of the promoters of modern Amazigh music, and he uses his songs as a means to denounce Almakhzan. His artwork has gotten him into trouble several times (his debut album was banned in Morocco in the early 1980s, and he has been arrested various times). It seems his

4 To trace the origins of the concept Almakhzan it is important to examine it within its historical and sociological contexts. In Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco (2000), David Montgomery Hart argues that the concept of Almakhzan was primarily political. It has been used since the mid-seventeenth century in combination with the word Bilad ('land'), such as in the phrase Bilad Almakhzan. On the one hand, Bilad Almakhzan was used to categorise the regions under the control of the central government for tax purposes. On the other hand, Bilad Siba ('Land of abandonment') was used to name the regions that did not pay taxes and over which the central government had little or no control (Hart 8-9). After the arrival of French colonial power in Morocco, the concept of Almakhzan was overworked in French colonial sociology. Currently, the concept is widely used in various academic disciplines and also in parliament, media, and the street by all Moroccans. I see Almakhzan as the ruling system throughout Morocco, of which the first priority is the well-being of the active elements that guarantee Almakhzan’s continuity. That is, metaphorically, I compare Morocco to a circle that includes elements such as institutions, businesses, associations, groups, and individuals; Almakhzan is a circle inside this circle that includes institutions, all political parties, businesses, associations, syndicates, Zawiats ('religious centres'), groups, and individuals throughout Morocco. The elements inside the circle of Almakhzan are active in protecting and regenerating the system, whereas the elements outside the circle of Almakhzan are passive as far as the protection of the system is concerned. Those within Almakhzan consider Moroccans outside its circle Raaya ('passive citizens'). In effect, ordinary people in Morocco generally name anyone associated with the Moroccan government or the ruling system (such as the police, soldiers, governors, ministers, and other official appointments) as Almakhzan.
strong motivation and love of music helps him persevere. In the 1990s, he immigrated to the Netherlands, but not feeling at ease there, he resettled in Belgium. Now, he spends most of his time writing short stories and composing lyrics for other Amazigh singers.

‘Come Back My Son’ reflects both the suffering that Imazighen have endured in their homeland and their uncertain condition as migrants in diaspora. In this chapter I provide a historical overview of the migration process of Amazigh community from the Rif. I see the role of Amazigh media—in light of Appadurai’s model of ‘community of sentiments’ that regards community as a group who feel and imagine things together—in highlighting the uncertainty that engulfs Imazighen in diaspora as they try to re-articulate their identity (Appadurai, Modernity 8). I argue that uncertainty affects the Amazigh imagined community in diaspora, and that their media reflect such confusion and its implications on Amazigh identity. Appadurai argues that a modern nation-state grows out of a quintessential cultural product of collective imagination (8). I extend this point to argue that Amazigh transnational identity grows out of the quintessential cultural product of collective imagination. Collective sentiments play an imperative role in creating a transnational Amazigh identity. That is, Imazighen imagine belonging to a transnational Amazigh community due to the collective distribution, interaction, and consumption of the images selectively related to Amazigh culture.

This chapter consists of four main sections. In the first part, I describe the evolution of migration patterns of Imazighen of the Rif region since the 1830s. This general historical overview of the flow of migrants from the Rif area assists in contextualising the song ‘Come Back My Son’, particularly the uncertainty in it, and elucidates the evolution of the experience of Amazigh migration throughout the whole thesis. In addition, I consider the way the past is reflected in ‘Come Back My Son’ and other contemporary Amazigh songs, and how this past affects the present identity of Imazighen. The second section investigates the link between songs and the exodus of Imazighen from the Rif region. Given that I will study in detail the role of other media, such as films and websites, in the coming chapters, at this stage the emphasis is placed mainly on Amazigh songs and their role in the process of migration and its implications. The third section considers the journey of

5 It is important to note that ‘the community of sentiments’ in this chapter is not primordial but imagined: Appadurai attributes current group politics to what he names ‘the work of imagination’ rather than primordial sentiments which he associates with the project of the modern nation-state (Modernity 146).
migration and the condition of diasporas. I contemplate the interchangeable use of ‘migrant’ and ‘diasporan’ which is followed by an analysis of ‘Come Back My Son’ and the way it depicts the condition of the Amazigh diaspora, especially in Europe. The final section in this chapter is ‘Socio-economic and political condition of Imazighen of the Rif’. These conditions are reflected in the song and partially contribute to the uncertainty that predominates it. The main character realises he is unwelcome in Europe, but he does not want to return to Morocco because of the dire socio-economic and political conditions in the Rif region. In this final part I consider how both the lyrics and the music of ‘Come Back My Son’ reflect the socio-economic and political conditions in the Rif and the way they affect Amazigh migrants. Importantly, in this section I address one of the main ingredients of each song: music.

**Amazigh Migrants between Past and Present**

The first element in any song is its title, and the title ‘Come Back My Son’ contains the idea of return. The title evokes movement from ‘a place’ to another. Yet, the son does not want to ‘return to the graveyard’. The term graveyard comes as a shock, since it raises the question of whether the son used to live in a graveyard. Inspecting the recent history of the Rif area highlights one aspect of this term, namely, the death of a nation-state project. The song, in general, portrays the state of confusion and uncertainty in which the son is entangled. Here, we see that the son is a migrant who feels bound up in uncertainty since he can neither return to the Rif area nor settle down in Europe. This experience is highlighted in the song as a confusing process that affects its sufferers. To comprehend the roots of this uncertainty, it is important to trace the routes Imazighen of the Rif region have taken.

The movements of Imazighen of the Rif region during the last two centuries can be summarised in three major, closely interrelated events: the consequences for the Rif of

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6 People usually attribute movement between places, but the son’s response in the song highlights another stratum of movement that occurs between place and space: between the Rif region as a place and the Amazigh imagined community as a space.

7 Appadurai, in *Modernity at Large*, argues that the general project of the nation-state is weakened, and this may apply to Morocco as a nation-state now in crisis because of globalisation. However, in the case of the Rif region, the project of the Rif Republic is not simply weak but dead. The idea of an Amazigh nation-state died with the dissolution of the Rif Republic in 1926, which lasted only five years.
the French invasion of and conflict in Algeria, the establishment of the Spanish protectorate in northern Morocco and the early attempts of independence by Riffians, and the exodus of Imazighen towards Europe after the independence of Morocco in 1956.

Before the nineteenth century, many Imazighen of the Rif area enjoyed immigration to foreign countries, and internal migration was also popular. They traveled, particularly during harvest seasons, from the Rif Mountains to work at the farms in the middle and west of Morocco. These seasonal migrants used their earnings to support their families in the rural areas of the Rif. Dutch anthropologist Paolo de Mas argues that those individuals who internally migrated were heads of families, usually fathers who moved when draught hit the Rif region in search for an additional income (‘Overlevingsdynamiek’). This form of migration was common among Imazighen of the Rif area in the past, and it is still popular among countryside Riffians. Even if migration cannot always be explained in terms of causes and consequences, highlighting the various aspects of this experience might assist to comprehend the uncertainty associated with it.

**Imazighen of the Rif region, Spanish protectorate, and Algeria**

Algeria was the first foreign destination for Riffian migrants. After their occupation of Algeria in 1832, the French structured an agricultural system composed of vast farms designed to produce a variety of vegetables and fruits, especially grapes for the French wine industry. As a result, lucrative salaries and the other services the French provided for their employees, such as free housing, tempted many Riffians. Riffian seasonal migrants were the hard workers the French desperately needed to continue their productions. In a national report, Abdellatif Fadlollah et al. assert that the increasing opportunities for wage labour at the French farms—situated mainly in the northern Algerian cities of Algiers and Oran—attracted a large number of Riffian seasonal migrants (51). In view of the fact that unemployed Riffians regarded the job opportunities in Algeria as a gold mine, many of them decided to migrate. Migration of Imazighen of the Rif to Algeria was not only popular during the nineteenth century but also even after the Spanish and French invasion of Morocco in 1912. In addition to the lucrative wages and free housing, the proximity of Algeria to the Rif region was another reason that popularised this destination for Riffian migrants. Initially making the trip to Algeria on foot or on mules, migrants’ journeys between Morocco and Algeria became easier after a railway system was completed in 1934.
This railway marks what Arjun Appadurai names a ‘new condition of neighborliness’, since the trip between Morocco and Algeria shortened from weeks or months to hours.\(^8\)

The hardship in the Rif area, then occupied by Spanish colonialists (1912–1956), also pushed many Imazighen to migrate to Algeria. The Spanish occupation of the Rif region was far worse compared to the conditions in the French protectorate in the rest of Morocco. The Spanish taxed Riffians heavily and exhausted the natural resources of the Rif area by sending raw materials, especially steel, back to Spain. Spanish occupiers only invested in projects like small primary schools and offices for medical consults, which served to gather intelligence for the Spanish military (Mediano 141). Unlike the French, the Spanish neither constructed infrastructures nor made any significant investments in the region. In addition, they restricted the movements of Imazighen from the Rif area to the main Moroccan cities situated in the French zone. Consequently, unemployment in northern Morocco was high and famine widespread. In his article ‘Riff War’, specialist in military history Douglas Porch argues that many Riffian tribes were driven to starvation or to Algeria after the Spanish invasion. The Spanish occupation of northern Morocco brought disastrous consequences on the socio-economic condition of the population who left *en masse* for Algeria in the early twentieth century.\(^9\) In effect, the flow of Moroccan migrants to Algeria did not stop until 1962 when the border between the two states closed. Undeniably, the Spanish occupation of the Rif area caused suffering for the majority of the population living in this region.

While ‘Come Back My Son’ records and highlights the uncertainty that characterises Riffian migrants in Europe, only few oral stories record the uncertainty those Riffian migrants in Algeria and their left-behind families experienced during the time of Spanish occupation.\(^10\) Currently, there are means of communication, such as telephones, fax, e-mail, and social media, which facilitate interaction between migrants and their families back in the Rif region. In addition, there are all kinds of media that document and

\(^8\) Appadurai notes that the development of transport and media create a ‘new condition of neighborliness’, which sets the stage for the creation of transnational identities (*Modernity* 29).

\(^9\) The French occupation of Algeria also had disastrous consequences on the local population: the French not only destroyed the traditional system of agriculture in the country but also killed half of a million of its inhabitants (Bourdieu and Sayad; Kantowicz).

\(^10\) There are only few personal stories narrated by relatives of former migrants that document the uncertainty in which the Riffian migrants lived in Algeria.
highlight the uncertainty of migration and the condition of left-behind families, such as songs, films, books, and websites. However, there are only a few oral stories that document the uncertainty that both young Riffian migrants experienced in Algeria and the confusion in which left-behind families lived for extended periods. One can imagine the uncertainty with which families live when the one whose earnings are the primary source of support for the entire family, who was usually a young man, travels on foot to Algeria. They do not know whether he made it to Algeria or not, whether he is still alive or dead, or whether he might come back or not. Riffian migrants in Algeria lived in uncertainty too, since many of them had not heard from their families who remained in the Rif region. They did know whether their families were still alive or had died as a consequence of famine and diseases.

Examining ‘Come Back My Son’ within a historical perspective highlights a few crucial aspects. Elwalid Mimoun elaborates: ‘The main character, in the song, describes the suffering in his motherland that actually reflects the dire socio-political condition of Imazighen. In the past, Imazighen, such as Mohamed Abdel Karim Elkhattabi, Mohamed Amazian, and others fought the Spanish occupation and sacrificed their lives in order to live freely in their own land’ (Elwalid, interview). Here, the artist traces the sufferings of Imazighen back to the early days of the Spanish occupation when Imazighen endured brutal war, starvation, and persecution.

Imazighen, who were living in the flat lands of the Rif region, escaped to mountainous areas after the Spanish invasion in 1912. They left their houses and proprieties behind and retreated to the mountains beyond the reach of Spanish artillery. They took either refuge with relatives (if they had any in the Rif Mountains) or with voluntary host families who helped refugees during the war. In fact, the Rif Mountains served as a natural shield. The Spanish anthropologist G. A. Meneses claims that because mountains are difficult to access and have harsh weather, ranges like the Atlas, the Rif, the Kabyle, and the Aurès proved ideal shelters for refugees of war. Imazighen in both Algeria and Morocco sought refuge in mountains during wars. The Rif war taught Imazighen of the Rif area the meaning of being a refugee or migrant in one’s own land. Even the word used to describe such forced movement—ɛaaq—is pejorative, as it connotes both movement and affliction. Regardless of the hardship of their condition, Riffians not only hoped to defeat the Spanish army stationed in northern Morocco, but also to create their own state.

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11 It was not unusual to witness, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the return of elderly Riffians from Algeria assumed dead by both their families and the Moroccan state.
Abdel Karim Alkhattabi, who is also known as Mulay Muḥend, was the leader of Riffian resistance that attempted political self-determination for the Rif region even before Moroccan independence. In 1921 he declared the Rif Republic in northern Morocco independent, with the small town of Ajdir as its capital. Alkhattabi fought the Spanish and defeated their armies on many occasions, notably in the battle of Anoual (22 July 1921) in which a few Riffian fighters annihilated the sophisticated Spanish army (Killingray 8). Various songs portray and praise Alkhattabi and the victories of the resistance against the Spanish occupiers: Tifyur’s song ‘Molay Muḥand’ (2007), Thidrin’s ‘Moulay Muḥend’ (2002), and Nabil Thawiza’s ‘Moulay Muḥend’ (2000) are few examples. In Ayawen’s song ‘Aḍar ubarran’ (1992), we hear the verse ‘Moluay Muḥend the great fighter / with bombs around his neck and his rifle tight to his chest / he annihilated the Spanish in Aḍar ubarran’ (my trans.). Here, Aḍar ubarran refers to the place where the first battle between Riffian freedom fighters against the Spanish army took place. Describing the losses of the Spanish army during the battle of Anoual, historian Manuel Suárez Cortina argues that Riffian freedom fighters killed 10,000 Spanish soldiers imprisoned hundreds (395). To revenge the defeat of the battle of Anoual the Spanish king Alfonso XIII made use of chemical warfare, which demoralised Riffian fighters (Pita 96-102; Arrhash). In addition, the eventual Spanish-French alliance ultimately proved catastrophic for the Riffian resistance, marking the end of the five-year Rif Republic and the war as well as the surrender of Alkhattabi. The French captured the Riffian leader and sent him into exile on La Reunion Island, where he remained for twenty years. In 1947, he sought refuge in Egypt, where he lived until his death in 1963.\footnote{For more information on the legacy of Alkhattabi, see Woolman.}

The name of Abdelkarim Alkhattabi described and praised in many songs and evoked in Elwalid Mimoun’s interview above represents a point of reference and identification that might provide temporary stability to many diasporans scattered through the world and feel confused. Here the name of Abdelkarim Alkhattabi becomes, in the imagination of many Riffians, the synonym for a lost nation. Regarding the role of images of home in relation to identity construction, Arjun Appadurai writes, ‘Images of a homeland are only part of the rhetoric of popular sovereignty and do not necessarily reflect a territorial bottom line’ (Modernity 161). Appadurai emphasises the idea that images of homeland, which come to substitute place, are the key ingredients in identity construction. While places were once references and essential elements in constituting identities and
identifications, we currently see that images and symbols of these places have substituted territory in identity construction and identification. Because, like so many of his compatriots, he lived in diaspora and remained a diasporan even after his death, Alkhattabi becomes for many Rifians the emblem of a transnational community.\textsuperscript{13}

After the end of the Rif war, the Spanish forced young Riffian fighters to participate in Franco’s army. De Mas affirms that Spain conscripted more than forty thousand Riffians to travel and participate in Franco’s army during the Spanish civil war (‘Marokkanse Migratie’ 113). It was the first time Riffians ‘migrated’ outside Africa, and it was a traumatic experience. In Massin’s song ‘Taziri Tamiri’ (‘Moon Love’, 2003) we hear, ‘General Franco where are my brothers / are they dead or alive, or frozen by fear’. This verse describes the grief among the inhabitants of the Rif region as a consequence of ‘abducting’ young Riffians to fight in Spain. This song revolves around the story of a young Riffian girl whose lover was snatched by the Spanish army and sent to the frontline of the Spanish civil war. The lyrics of this song date back to 1936 and were transmitted orally from one generation to another.\textsuperscript{14} These Riffians were young men who helped Francisco Franco crush the Republican fighters in Spain.\textsuperscript{15} After the end of the Spanish civil war in 1939, the majority of the Riffian fighters returned to their families in the Rif. The rest chose to serve as auxiliary soldiers in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Mellia. Although the act of conscripting Riffian fighters in the Spanish civil war is not a conventional type of migration, it nonetheless marks a new chapter of Imazighen movement to Europe.

The shortage of labour after the Second World War pushed France to recruit Imazighen of the Rif in Algeria to work in Europe. Singer Elwalid Mimoun asserts that European countries imported labour from North Africa (although the process of recruitment was unofficial in Algeria, since the state was still under occupation), and France was active in recruiting Moroccan immigrants (Interview). French employers usually approached many Imazighen of the Rif region in Algeria and offered job contracts to work in France. The majority of those migrants took the offer and traveled to France where they then

\textsuperscript{13} Alkhattabi’s relatives and closest friends rumour that his testament was to remain in Egypt as long as the remains of colonialists rule Morocco.

\textsuperscript{14} On the issue of transmitting the lyrics of ‘Taziri Tamiri’, see Yasser Farhat’s documentary film \textit{Singing for Survival} (2008).

\textsuperscript{15} Both Franco and the Republicans used fighters from different nationalities in their armies (Keene).
settled. In his article on Moroccan migration, Dutch historian Herman Obdeijn argues that in the period between 1949 and 1962 Moroccan migrants in France increased from 20,000 to 53,000, and the majority worked either in the steel industry or in mines. This Algerian recruitment campaign was low in comparison with the mass recruitment that followed Moroccan independence in 1956, and especially after the Rif uprising of 1958.

Imazighen exodus towards Europe

The second verse of the third stanza in ‘Come Back My Son’ reflects both the idea of deterritorialization and the emotions that accompany such a process: ‘The departure from my homeland (entered in my bones) broke my heart’. There are three significant elements in this verse: ‘departure’, ‘my homeland’, and ‘broken heart’. Diasporans expressing their distress is a message declared through the song, partly because of ‘departure’ and migration. Here, the song becomes the field in which the Amazigh diasporas interact with their imagined homeland. In this song, the mother, who represents this imagined homeland, is able to interact with her deterritorialized son, or Imazighen generally. Appadurai argues that deterritorialized populations need to keep contact with the homeland, which is partly invented and exists only in the imagination of these populations (Modernity 49). Songs like ‘Come Back My Son’ are a means to keep Riffian Imazighen in touch with their homeland, which has become only an idea in their imagination after they departed for Europe. These means are also important in highlighting the state of emotions of diasporans especially their uncertainty in host countries.

The Rif uprising of 1958 is an event that partially contributed to the early migration of Imazighen of the Rif area towards host countries in Europe. After Morocco’s independence and two years of hardship and starvation, Riffians became frustrated with the Moroccan regime. Speaking of this event, Elwalid Mimoun claims that freedom fighters after independence were oppressed, persecuted, and murdered by the Moroccan regime and mercenaries of colonialism in the period from 1958–59 (Interview). In addition, the policy of seclusion and starvation enacted by the Moroccan regime in the Rif area led to millions of Imazighen, in particular, and Moroccans in general, to migrate (Interview). Elwalid points to two factors which led to mass migration to Europe: the persecution of freedom fighters, culminating with the 1958 uprising, and the anarchy and economic distress that followed the invasion of the Moroccan army to the Rif region. Riffians were not only troubled by their economic distress but also by their exclusion from the corridors of power.
in the kingdom, which was mainly in the hands of the institution of the monarchy and its close allies with the military and civilian political figures. In his detailed account of the uprising in the Rif, cited in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, Greg Noakes states that to stop the revolt the crown prince Hassan led an army composed of two thirds of the Moroccan military in a campaign that lasted more than a year and ended with the seizure and control of the region (56). Among Riffians, the expedition is known as the Iqqabban (‘helmet’) campaign, since the dark-green helmeted Moroccan armies were spread throughout the Rif area.

The Helmet campaign is another traumatic episode in the modern history of the Rif, as the inhabitants of the region again began to escape to mountains. Escapees fled the ruthless Moroccan soldiers, who lacked discipline, raped women, killed men, and robbed and burned houses. Since then, the inhabitants of the region continue to suffer from oppression, underdevelopment and poverty. The population’s only hope seems limited to further escape or migration to Europe. In their song ‘Abriḏ inu ḏ wa’ (‘This Is My Way’, 2002) the musical band Thidrin sing:

Although they sent me away to the limits of the world and left me naked and barefooted,

Although they broke my bones with the warplane, and electrified my ears endlessly,

This is my way, I have always wanted it.

Do not cry mother, do not shed a single tear for me.

This is my way, I have always wanted it. (my trans.)

Elements in the above verses are indicative of historical and contemporary events. The ‘warplane’ refers to the events of 1958–1959, during which the Moroccan regime used warplanes to attack the Rif area. The word ‘electrification’ refers to the torture of Amazigh activists in Moroccan prisons during and after the events of 1958–1959. The words

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16 There are still thousands of eyewitnesses to the atrocities committed in the Rif during 1958–59; the current king, Mohammed VI, appointed The Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2004 whose tasks, among others, is to record stories from eyewitnesses and victims of the 1958 campaign. To learn more about the events, see Yasser Farhat’s documentary film Singing for Survival (2008).
‘barefooted and naked’ refers to poverty that characterises the Rif.\textsuperscript{17} Finally, ‘the limits of the world’ refers to host countries where Imazighen of the Rif currently live. The band uses the pronoun ‘they’ to refer to the ruling system in Morocco that ‘sent’ Imazighen to foreign countries. While in ‘Come Back My Son’ we hear the word ‘departure’, here we hear the word ‘sent’. Although the first impression of both words does not indicate forced movement, the expressions that follow them illustrate that indeed both words mean \textit{eaaq}.\textsuperscript{18}

‘This Is My Way’ engenders a tone of defiance that characterises Imazighen of the Rif and assists in raising consciousness among these people. Regardless of the fact that the singer and other Imazighen of the Rif region are either pushed directly or indirectly to migrate to ‘the limits of the world’, they are defiant and resist against the oppression from \textit{Almakhzan}. The ‘My Way’ in the title denotes this resistant path. ‘This Is My Way’ narrates a Moroccan migrant in Europe who can raise resistance against the tyranny of \textit{Almakhzan}. Unlike the son in ‘Come Back My Son’, who is bewildered and does not know what to do, the speaker in ‘This Is My Way’ confidently addresses his mother (also an imagined homeland) and pleas with her not to cry because he believes he migrated in order to raise resistance against the oppression of Imazighen in Morocco. Arjun Appadurai contends that mass media provokes agency (\textit{Modernity} 7). In fact, media in general and songs in particular raise consciousness among an oppressed population; ‘This Is My Way’ and ‘Come Back My Son’ typify this. The band’s biography on their website (www.thidrin.com) offers illustrations of the song ‘This Is My Way’. Thidrin explain that the band members decided to migrate and escape to Europe after being persecuted in the Rif region because they wanted to perform what they most love: making music that portrays the condition of Imazighen while freely expressing their views without fear. Like the members of Thidrin, ordinary Amazigh citizens also choose to emigrate from Morocco.

After Morocco’s independence, many European governments began seeking Moroccan candidates for immigration. West-Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands all signed agreements with Morocco to recruit guest workers in 1963, 1964,

\textsuperscript{17}It is important to note that poverty forced other non-Amazigh groups to migrate from the rest of Morocco.

\textsuperscript{18}The word ‘departure’ followed by ‘broke my heart’ means that there is unhappiness, and Elwalid Mimoun in interview, as previously indicated, claims that he and other Imazighen were forced to immigrate. The word ‘sent’, accompanied by expressions like ‘limits of the world’, ‘naked’, and ‘barefooted’, indicates not just forced movement but also expulsion and punishment.
and 1969, respectively, and recruitment agencies were active throughout Morocco. Yet, due to bureaucracy, the recruitment process by European agencies was slow (Obdeijn). Regardless of how well the Moroccan regime facilitated the exit of Riffians, the official procedure followed by the European agencies took a long time. That is to say, the Moroccan government was initially keen to let Riffians leave the country, since this group had caused enough trouble for Rabat. To circumvent the slow guest-worker bureaucracy, many Riffians were allowed to obtain a Moroccan passport, a document difficult to acquire at the time. Meanwhile, Riffian migrants and their European employers discovered new tactic of recruiting new potential migrants: Riffian migrants began to travel to Europe as tourists. In addition, European employers who offered work and shelter welcomed many Riffian migrants who entered Europe illegally. A tourist visa, rather than a work visa, was the easiest way to arrive in Europe. Georges Reniers asserts that many Moroccan migrants in Europe started to help their Moroccan friends or relatives who wanted to work in Europe. They acted as intermediaries between European employers and potential migrants. The first legalisation campaign of the illegal and seasonal migrants during the 70s in Europe prompted large flows of migrants (Reniers 683).

A migrant’s selection of destinations in Europe follows a specific pattern. Since the 1970s, Riffian immigrants largely select destinations where relatives and friends live. Thus, it is common to see migrants from the same village or city live in one particular European town, area, or country. For instance, Riffians originating from the city of Al Hoceima and Beni Bouayach tend to migrate to the Netherlands. People from Imzouren and Ait Touzin typically settle in Belgium. Riffians from Aknoul and Taza usually live in France. In Migration and Development in Southern Morocco, G. H. de Haas states that migration flows ‘follow a specific pattern, since migrants originating from the same village, region, or town usually settle and live in the same cities and sometimes even in the same quarters in Europe’ (102). Interestingly, the works of diasporic Amazigh artists, particularly singers, often reflect migration patterns that their fellow Amazigh migrants have established.

In examining the second verse of the second stanza in the song ‘Come Back My Son’ one favorite destination of Riffian migrants emerges: ‘Oh Mother, I am here in Germany’. The song’s nod to Germany confirms of a pattern established by Nador’s inhabitants, who have a tendency to migrate to Germany. In effect, Elwalid Mimoun, an artist born in the village of ‘Ait Sidel’ and raised in Nador, performs the song. Accordingly,
Elwalid Mimoun and numerous other singers from the Nador province have a tendency to depicting Germany in their songs.

The line ‘Oh Mother, I am here in Germany’ is also the son’s desperate attempt to convince himself he is not a confused and uncertain subject entangled in the process of migration, but a person who lives in a place called Germany. He is lost in himself and his own world, but he is still in state of denial. Highlighting the situation and the difficulty many migrants confront as they try to find stability in an uncertain world of migration or exile, Appadurai writes, ‘what is new is that this is a world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference, as critical life choices are made, can be very difficult’ (Modernity 44). Here, Appadurai explains the difficulty many diasporans encounter in creating points of reference to keep them in balance in a globalised, unstable world. Imazighen departed from the Rif area took images of that place with them, which become increasingly blurred as they try to integrate in new host societies with different cultures. They also find it difficult to articulate their identity in light of these representations of their imagined homeland.

The song ‘Come Back My Son’ was created and released in a period characterised by the large flow of Moroccan migrants to Europe. The song, composed at the beginning of the 1980s, belongs to an epoch known in the Rif region as the ‘period of migration boom’. According to national statistical services in Europe, from 1980–2000, the number of Moroccan immigrants to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Italy almost tripled (Basfao and Taarji). This period probably witnessed the largest number of migrants arriving to Europe from Morocco. Riffians entered Europe in various ways, but legal migration was the rule at the time.

Since the 80s family reunification has been the most efficient way to immigrate to Europe. The son in ‘Come Back My Son’ is married to a German woman. This character is an exception to the trend, because, in the last three decades, the majority of migrants prefer bringing a documented partner from the home country (Werdmolder 95). That is, Imazighen in Europe tend to choose partners in Morocco and bring him or her to Europe. Family reunification also describes Amazigh migrants, who have remaining family in Morocco, bringing their family to Europe. Another factor encouraging Amazigh migrants to bring their families to Europe is a fear that European countries may attempt to halt the process of family reunification. Sociologist Han Entzinger argues that the increasingly
restrictive migration policies adopted by many European countries stimulate the process of family reunification, simply because many migrants fear this process may be restricted or forbidden (267). According to Entzinger, family reunification is a process that has been the rule as far as Moroccan migrants are concerned. Nevertheless, this process does not apply to the central character in the song ‘Come Back My Son’.

In ‘Come Back My Son’, we hear: ‘I am married to a German woman’. The case of this Amazigh individual seems to correspond to the case of Imazighen who entered into Europe illegally or as tourists and overstayed their visas. The son in this song seems to have opted to get married to a German woman in order to legalise his status. Although entering illegally into Europe was not preferable during the 80s and 90s, many were forced to undertake this hazardous journey. The flow of large numbers of Amazigh migrants to Europe has led to the creation of an important migratory group there.

**Songs and the Journey of Imazighen to Europe**

Amazigh artists use songs to address the daily worries the Amazigh community face both in Morocco and in diaspora. The diaspora consumes and interacts with Amazigh songs, which assist in the process of re-generating its identity. Songs are the most common media amongst Imazighen. They are produced in Tamazight and in my review of dozens of Amazigh music albums made by Rifian artists over the last 30 years I have found that all of them contained at least one or two songs that address the theme of migration and its implications on diasporans or on the population in the Rif region.¹⁹ This indicates the importance and resonance of such issues in the Rif area as well as throughout the Amazigh diaspora. Amazigh songs are consumed by Imazighen in diaspora throughout the world, and they continuously (re)shape the identity of this diaspora. This identity defies nation-states and borders, becoming transnational. Regarding the role of media in creating settings or ‘diasporic public spheres’ in which such transnational identity is generated, Appadurai argues that deterritorialized viewers’ consumption of and interaction with media from the homeland create phenomena that confound theories dependant upon the idea of nation-states as vehicles for any social change (Modernity 4). Appadurai draws attention to the rise

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¹⁹ All the songs I mention in the first and second chapters are from albums that include at least one or two songs that deal with the issue of migration.
of these deterritorialized public spheres, in which the identity of diasporas are articulated, and he calls them ‘phenomena’ since they defy borders and nation-states.

Songs are popular amongst Imazighen of the Rif partly because they are distributed in audiocassettes and CDs that are cheap and easy to use, and can therefore reach broad socio-economic strata. They do not require any acquired knowledge, such as with the Internet, since there is a large group of illiterate Moroccans. Speaking to the importance of cassette recorders to Riffians, the Amazigh scholar Amar Almasude writes, ‘Cassette recorders provided Moroccans not only with the option to record and play their favorite music, but also to utilise them as form of communication on a mass scale’ (120). Almasude describes the historical role that the audiocassette played within Morocco in general and the Rif region in particular. Cassette recorders conquered Moroccan markets at the end of the 60s, and were initially used by local poets and Amazigh militants to educate the public regarding Amazigh causes. Later on, Riffian singers used audiocassettes to distribute their songs. Currently CDs and MP3s are starting to fill the market shelves of Morocco, but the old audiocassettes are still popular in parts of the Rif region and throughout Morocco.20

Contemporary Amazigh songs evolved from folk songs. Women perform Amazigh folk songs, or Izran, during all kinds of festivities, such as marriages, feasts of harvests, and birth ceremonies. The women use the Ajjun/Bendir (a local tambour) and perform a dance called Arrays as they sing. The lyrics usually reflect the daily worries, love stories, and other social aspects of Riffian livelihood.21 Riffian folk music has affected the artistic career of many Amazigh singers, including Elwalid Mimoun. Currently, the majority of recorded songs by Riffian artists make use of the lyric form Izran. Only a few artists make use of poems written by Amazigh poets who compose Izran professionally. As indicated earlier, Elwalid composed the lyrics to the song ‘Come Back My Son’.

Notably, there are two main genres of Amazigh songs, the šaebi and the revolutionary. The Amazigh šaebi refers to songs usually produced in a short time and distributed on a massive scale. These types of songs are made for commercial purposes and there are thousands of albums of this genre in Riffian markets. The lyrics of these songs

\[20\] The majority of cassettes and CDs in the Rif region are illegal copies.
\[21\] There are also few Amazigh male singers of Izran, such as Chikh Mohand and his sons, Moudrous; to learn more about Izran, see Bounfour and Amezian.
often revolve about festivities and fun. For instance, in one of his songs ‘Salm-ayi ya baba’ (‘Allow me Father’) the prominent Amazigh Shaabi singer Said Mariouari, sings:

Allow me father to wed an Amazigh migrant in the Netherlands;

We will get married Inshallah [‘God willing’]; this year in Holland Inshallah

Or here Inshallah; and all relatives will be invited Inshallah. (my trans.)

‘Salm-ayi ya baba’ portrays the intention of an Amazigh man living in the Rif area to wed a migrant living in the Netherlands and asks for his father’s permission. The Amazigh šaebi plays some role to raise awareness of being an Amazigh in diaspora, since this music is performed during the majority of Amazigh weddings. Still, the danceable beat and its festive character are the only elements that attract people either in Morocco or in diaspora to this kind of music (Gazzah 118). Further, šaebi songs do not highlight the uncertainty and confusion many migrants experience; instead, they tend to depict the livelihood of migrants as joyous or ideal. Regarding the role of the šaebi songs vis-à-vis the subject of migration, Elwalid Mimoun argues that šaebi songs do not perform any rational analysis of the exodus of Imazighen to Europe, and therefore, are doomed to disappear (Interview). Here, the singer compares revolutionary songs with šaebi; he attributes the long-term popularity of revolutionary songs to the themes they address. He argues that because šaebi songs do not address serious social, cultural, and economic issues their popularity last only for a short period.

Indeed, sometimes there are conflicting messages in Amazigh songs, which do not help to reduce the uncertainty in the world of Amazigh migrants. That is, while songs such as ‘Allow Me Father’ depict the world of migrants as an ideal world, ‘Come Back My Son’ depicts the uncertainty and confusion by which many Amazigh diasporans are entwined. There are two different messages that add to—instead of reduce—the uncertainty in the world of migrants. Regarding the fluidity and sometimes conflicting messages in diaspora and their impact on migrants, Appadurai writes, ‘It is in this atmosphere that the invention

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22 Said Mariouari is a šaebi singer who lives in Belgium and his songs are easily accessible online. The song ‘Salm-ayi ya baba’ is available on Youtube, anzuf.com, and rifmelody.com.

23 There are many revolutionary songs still popular after many decades, such as the songs of Elwalid Mimoun, Twatoun, and Ithran, while the popularity of the šaebi songs typically only last for a month or few years.
of tradition (and of ethnicity, kinship and other identity markers) can become slippery, as the search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication’ (*Modernity* 44). Appadurai draws attention to the atmosphere of uncertainty characteristic of many diasporas; the attempts of these diasporas to create some certainty is usually confronted with the complexity and fluidity of transnational communication. It is difficult for Amazigh deterritorialized subjects to navigate in this murky world and gain certainty among a flux of messages.

The *revolutionary* songs are another genre and they have a specific audience, mainly Amazigh intellectuals and activists. The lyrics of these songs usually address more serious issues. *Revolutionary* singers compose songs that not only address themes related to Amazigh culture and identity but also create songs that scrutinize the socio-economic and political condition of Imazighen in Morocco and diaspora. Usually, *revolutionary* singers hold low esteem for šæbi singers, because they believe that šæbi singers have no purpose other than monetary gain (Elwalid, interview). In recent years, *revolutionary* songs have lost ground to šæbi in Morocco. Currently, the number of *revolutionary* albums does not exceed two hundred. Given the fact that a large number of the *revolutionary* songs’ audience have migrated to Europe, it has become difficult for *revolutionary* singers to find a music recording company in Morocco. Often, producers prefer to work with artists who create songs that suit the interests of the company and not the artist. The šæbi singers always create what the producers require and, as a result, dominate Riffian markets.

Unlike the šæbi songs that describe migration in terms of happiness, love stories, and perfect marriages, ‘Come Back My Son’ portrays migration as a hazardous journey. In the line, ‘Oh, mother reckon me a loser, oh mother reckon me a loser’, the son acknowledges his dilemma and views his ordeal as a failure. He can neither lead a happy life in his host country nor return to his homeland. The artist uses this moment to show a possible outcome of migration without any preparation. In the 80s, ‘Come Back My Son’ was seen as the artist’s plea to his compatriots in Morocco to remain in their homeland where they could work together for the well being of Amazigh community. It is also a warning to young prospective immigrants about setbacks they may encounter in the journey and destination; the feeling of uncertainty is a typical example of migratory setbacks when a person feels unwelcome in a host country.
The song highlights issues constitutive to Imazighen both in the Rif region and in diaspora. As a result of migration patterns, in the past, the song’s audience likely lived in the Rif area, but, currently, part of them are scattered throughout Amazigh diaspora and Morocco. Although the character of the son in ‘Come Back My Son’ marries a German woman (an act seen as a way to integrate in German society), he does not feel ‘at home’. In another line we hear: ‘Aqq-ayi ḏa mother, a stranger’. Here, the singer portrays a gloomy picture of Europe, because this line indicates that diasporic Imazighen and other ethnicities might never be accepted as equals. In his comments on the character of the son in the song, Elwalid claims that migration can bring some forms of economic benefit, but it can be disastrous for Amazigh identity and culture. The character of the son shows the implications of the pressures to assimilate in Europe (Elwalid, interview). Elwalid underscores the role of host societies in creating uncertainty among Amazigh diasporans. In the song, the son is sad and confused, since he cannot articulate his cultural identity. He feels estranged because the host country does not accommodate his cultural identity. Instead of integrating Imazighen in Europe, host societies either promote assimilation, isolation, or, sometimes, expulsion. This environment contributes to the uncertainty in which the character of the son and other migrants are entangled.

Coincidentally, the songs, which are meant to discourage potential migrants, might have triggered another wave of migrants. That is, Amazigh songs that usually emphasise the dire condition of Amazigh migrants in Europe do not seem to frighten potential migrants. Instead, potential immigrants, who listen to songs like ‘Come Back My Son’, feel tempted by the journey. Speaking of the communicating role of media, Appadurai notes, ‘The role that the media play in people’s imagination, in the past expressed in dreams, songs, fantasies, myths and stories… has now acquired a singular new power in social life’ (“Global” 469). This implies that the ideas spread through media in general and songs in particular can have considerable social impact. The revolutionary songs together with the šaebi might have shaped migration as forbidden fruit, capturing the imagination of many young Imazighen in Morocco. Elwalid Mimoun denies the fact that ‘Come Back My Son’ and other revolutionary songs promote migration (Interview). Nevertheless, Riffian singers might have contributed to the exodus of Imazighen from Morocco. Repetition of the theme of migration in songs is probably enough to enchant an audience’s unconscious and plant the idea of migration in their imagination.
Amazigh migrants and Diaspora

The song ‘Come Back My Son’ embodies the uncertainty and in-betweenness in which migrants live as they are torn between their motherland and host country. Although the character of the son is somehow unified, the call of the mother torments him, and his existence is nothing but uncertainty. He is the same as Sisyphus and the rock who lives in constant agony. The son is caught between two worlds; on the one hand, he attaches importance to his motherland and cultural identity, and on the other hand, he tries to settle in a world which is strange and hostile. (Elwalid, interview)

The position of the son can be located between what Appadurai names ‘diasporas of hope’ and ‘diasporas of despair’ (Modernity 6). In effect, the son embodies these two: he has escaped his homeland hoping to improve his social, economic, and cultural condition, but he remains in despair because he realises he is not accepted in Europe and can hardly integrate in his host society. The singer attributes the son’s confusion and uncertainty to his attempt to reconcile the strange world where he lives and the thoughts regarding his homeland and culture. Here the son carries heavy weight of many migrants’ feelings. It is the burden of living in a heavy place, not just in-between two cultures. The son’s livelihood in the space of migration, especially his attempt to combine the two cultures, proves tormenting, and his cravings to find peace never end. While Homi Bhabha underscores the importance of in-between cultures or inbetween space in the process of generating new cultural meanings, he does not mention the continuous torment of many subjects that inhabit these spaces (Location 56). The son, who represents Amazigh migrants, not only lives in-between cultures, but also in a blurred space since the borderline between a migrant and diasporan is distorted. Conventionally, migrants are defined as people born outside of the country where they live; however, various groups who do not fit this description are currently still categorised as migrants. For instance, Imazighen born in Europe are still labeled as the third and fourth generations of migrants. In The Media of Diaspora, Karim states that diaspora, while denoting the exodus of Jews outside the land of Israel, currently

24 Elwalid Mimoun cites the example of Sisyphus rock from the Greek mythology, in which Sisyphus is punished by the Gods to roll a round-shaped rock up the hill. As Sisyphus approaches the top of the hill the rock rolls down to the bottom and he has to restart from the beginning again.

25 Diasporas as a term is derived from the Greek word diaspeirein that entails the scattering of seeds.
connotes a variety of migratory groups (1-2). Scholars use various criteria to differentiate between diasporas and migrants.

Many theorists argue that the distinction between a diasporan and migrant is measured by the duration of the time spent in the host country. In *Diaspora Politics*, Gabriel Sheffer argues that ethnic diasporas are the result of forced and voluntary migration of ethnic groups that settle permanently in a host country (16). Others point to an individual’s right to acquire citizenship in a host country as another aspect that separates a diasporan from a migrant. Bearing this in mind, the majority of the first generation of Imazighen died in Europe, while a large number of the second, third, and fourth generations hold European citizenship. Nevertheless, it may be ineffectual to argue that European Imazighen are exclusively diasporans because they are still perceived in their host country as migrants.

Imazighen in Europe have been affected by the continuous shift in their status. For instance, in the 60s when Imazighen arrived in the Netherlands they were first labeled as *gastarbeiders* (‘guest workers’), but as they failed to return to their native country, their status changed into migrants or foreigners. After the birth of the third and fourth generations of Riffian Imazighen on European soil, the term *allochtoon* began to replace ‘migrant’ and ‘foreigner’.26 This new marking is perceived by many Imazighen as an unwillingness of host countries to accept them. As a reaction to the use of these markers by the so-called natives in host countries, the majority of European Imazighen reject *allochtoon* and usually react with disgust upon hearing it. Addressing Imazighen and other groups in Europe as guest workers, migrants, foreigners, or *allochtoonen* has only aggravated the condition and the self-esteem of these groups.

The song ‘Come Back My Son’ highlights the condition of Imazighen in Europe generally and their psychological state particularly. Elwalid sings: ‘aqq-ayi ḏa mother in *Rumi*’s land, aqq-ayi ḏa mother in bars drinking whisky’. *Aqq-ayi ḏa* translates as ‘I am fixed here’, and evokes boredom, distress, and misery when repeated. This verse reflects the uncertainty in which many Amazigh diasporans have been engulfed since the 80s. ‘Rumis’ land’ refers to Europe, since the word *Rumi*, as mentioned before, refers to Europeans. The use of the marker *Rumi* in the song highlights the use of markers such as

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26 The word *allochtoon* in the Dutch dictionary *Van Dale* defines a person originating ‘van elders’ (‘from elsewhere’).
foreigners or *allochtoonen* to address other ethnicities within Europe. Nonetheless, the use of *Rumi* in another verse of ‘Come Back My Son’ has other implications.

The use of the word Rumi by the son to refer to his wife is telling. Elwalid sings: ‘I am married to ṯaṛumešṯ with whom I got children’. The use of the word Rumi to refer to Europeans is common in North Africa, but the use of such marker to address one’s own wife is strange. The marriage of an Amazigh man to a German woman seems a perfect example of a successful marriage of cultures, but there are markers in the song that indicate otherwise. By using the word ṯaṛumešṯ, the son emphasises the growing tension in his relationship with his wife. Neither the son nor his German wife feel at home in their marriage. There is tension between the centripetal powers of Europeanness and the centrifugal pull of diasporic diversity in this continent. In fact, what may seem a successful marriage of cultures starts to show cracks that may develop into a break that threatens cultural diversity not only in Germany but also in the rest of Europe. The line ‘Mother aqqa-yi ḏa a stranger’ hints at the anti-immigration sentiments that brew in Europe and stereotyping of migrants.

The stereotyping of migrants as the unwanted other has widened the gap between the so-called European nationalists and migratory groups like Imazighen. Imazighen, similar to many ethnic groups in Europe, feel the increasing intolerance of their host countries as they are categorised as strangers. In her discussion of the topic of hospitality and in her definition of the word stranger, Mireille Rosello states, “the stranger” [is viewed as] a foreigner, a recently arrived immigrant, the naturalized child of immigrants, or even a French child born to non-European parents who continues to be treated as other’ (5). This definition applies not only within France but also in the rest of Europe. In addition, Rosello’s analysis does not include an important category: children born to European parents whose ancestors arrived from outside Europe. For instance, Amazigh children born in the Netherlands to parents who were also born in the Netherlands and hold Dutch citizenship are still labeled as *buitenlanders* (‘foreigners’). Currently, these children see themselves as the unwanted other. In fact, this sense of hostility prevails in European media, especially after the 9/11 attacks on the US. North African migrants are regularly depicted as a Muslim threat, criminals, or unsatisfied foreigners. In his essay ‘Deconstruction of Actuality’, Jacques Derrida asserts that unconditional hospitality is the

27 It is important to underscore the fact that the idea of ‘strangeness’ is reciprocal; i.e., Imazighen are ‘Others’ in the eyes of Europeans and vice-versa.
basis for justice to prevail in any society (35). He suggests that in order to have a harmonious society, it is vital for migrants or ethnic diasporas to feel they are accepted without any prejudices or stereotypes. This unconditional tolerance of ethnicities, or the ‘Other’, may both enhance the incorporation of these groups in their host countries and create a harmonious society.

**Europe, anti-immigration, and diasporic Imazighen**

The song’s line ‘aqq-ayi ḏa mother in bars drinking whisky’ is of great significance. A few Europeans may interpret this as a happy moment, since the main character enjoys himself drinking whisky. Nonetheless, for the majority of Imazighen, a married man who goes to bars to drink alcohol and leaves his wife and children at home is immoral. Therefore, this line portrays a frustrated, miserable, and fraught Amazigh individual. Typically, someone as young as the character of the son in ‘Come Back My Son’ should be at work or at home with his family, but this person chooses to spend his time in bars. This verse indicates that something is wrong in the livelihood of this Amazigh individual. Many listeners may think that the miserable condition of this person is caused only by nostalgia toward his mother/land. This idea is not completely true because the son compares Morocco to a graveyard (‘Oh mother! I cannot return to the graveyard’). The son loves the idea of his homeland but he compares it to a graveyard—because of hardship and suffering, or political oppression and poverty—and does not want to return to it in its current condition. The son is depressed and confused because of his inability to return to Morocco and cope with his present condition in Europe.

The rise of anti-immigration sentiments in Europe may be one of the reasons behind the son’s inability to feel at home in his host country. In Europe many immigrants feel discriminated and their cultural identity disregarded. To highlight this point, Elwalid Mimoun claims that European practices do not officially recognise Amazigh culture and identity for many reasons. According to Elwalid, member states do not want to see a recognised Amazigh group; the European Union wants to keep Imazighen as ‘reserve employers’ in time of need. Any official recognition of Amazigh culture and identity would entail an increase of Amazigh awareness leading to Imazighen demanding full civil, cultural, and identity rights like other European citizens (Interview). The case of Imazighen

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**28** The singer claims that the European authorities treat Imazighen as a spare wheel, only used in time of need, to keep the growth of their economies.
in Europe is not different from other cultural groups. Even if discriminatory attitudes toward others are not new to Europe, the recurrence of such behavior is appalling. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries discrimination in Europe was common (Rich 80). Currently, discrimination is still practiced against migrants. In *Guests and Aliens*, Saskia Sassen argues that discrimination against migrant workers was frequent in the nineteenth century, and current discrimination has only changed the argument, since the focus nowadays is based on both race and culture (135). This new-old obsession raises many questions and the most urgent one is whether this attitude is confined to a given country or widespread throughout Europe.

Unfortunately, current political phenomena in Europe show that discrimination against migrants is more of a rule than about isolated incidents. These political phenomena reject cultural diversity by remaining suspicious about a group’s loyalty to an origin country over the host country or that groups will refuse to assimilate into the host society. Indeed, the latter argument is accurate since, for instance, many Imazighen in Europe refuse to assimilate and call for integration based on mutual respect, and that cultures should be treated equally without the domination of a particular one. However, the first argument is not entirely accurate since these transnational communities have no loyalty toward a territorial nation-state, but, rather, toward an imagined nation constructed and maintained across borders. Regarding the issue of diasporas and loyalty, Appadurai argues that diasporic diversity creates loyalty toward no territorial transnation (*Modernity* 173). In fact, there are many examples of political parties that openly reject cultural diversity in Europe. In 1993, *Le Monde* reported that the former French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua clearly stated that he is against a multiethnic and multicultural France (“M. Pasqua”). Similarly, the German Republikaner Party platform of January 1990 declares, ‘We say No to a “Multicultural” society and thus to a multiethnic state’ (Republikaner 18; my trans.). The rise of extreme-right parties in Europe, such as the Party For Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, Belgium’s Vlaams Belang, the Danish People’s Party, and the French National Front, echo the anti-immigration sentiments that brew amongst the European masses.

These sentiments not only create uncertainty and confusion among migrants but also alienate them. The Amazigh music band Thifridjas sing in their latest album *Tamurt irumiyen* (*The Land of Rumis*, 2008) about the feelings of estrangement among migrants and the pain among their relatives remaining in the Rif region. One song, giving the album
its title, is constructed in a dialogue form like ‘Come Back My Son’. The only difference is that the dialogue in ‘Tamurṯ irumiyyen’ is between a father who migrated in Europe and his young son left behind in Morocco. The father sings sadly:

The land of Rumis took my imagination,

I followed your path and left my land,

I forgot my relatives and my dears.

His son responds:

Why did you leave me father

I have never felt happy,

and life without you is worthless. (“Tamurṯ”)

The members of Thifridjas band live in the Netherlands and their latest album depicts the regret of many Amazigh migrants initially enchanted by the idea of living in Europe. Like the son in ‘Come Back My Son’, who left his country and traveled to Europe without any preparation, the father in ‘The Land Of Rumis’ followed the footsteps or path of other Amazigh migrants and migrated to Europe without thinking about the consequences of his act. This father experiences the same uncertainty many migrants undergo, since they can neither return to their left-behind relatives nor integrate in their host society. As the case with many migrants they see themselves as unwanted aliens in their host country. Through their daily exposure to anti-immigrant sentiments in the host country and their sense of guilt vis-à-vis their compatriots left behind in the homeland, they come to the conclusion that they are despised in both Europe and their country of origin. Although some European leaders try to portray Europe as an assembly of liberal countries, recent anti-immigration feelings on the continent prove otherwise. Worse, the level of discrimination practiced against migratory groups is dire.

North Africans are on the top list of the most despised minorities in many European countries. Imazighen constitute a large part of the North African migrants living
in Europe. So-called nationalists seem to have an aversion to North Africans for reasons like race, culture, and religion. Recent arguments about the ‘War on Terror’ become the basis for all kinds of discrimination, and European nationalists regularly launch verbal attacks on migrants in the name of a fight against terrorism. Other reasons generating such attitudes among ordinary people can be seen in Dutch society. On attitudes of the Dutch regarding migrants, Frank Van Tubergen and Ineke Maas argue that natives (‘autochthornous’ people) tend to reject outsiders (‘allochthornous’ groups) because they see their arrival as a threat to their own culture and see migrants as competitors for job opportunities and housing (10). North Africans are blamed for high levels of unemployment in the Netherlands. It is somehow ironic, since the majority of migrants arrived in Europe because of labour shortage. The song ‘Come Back My Son’ mirrors the implications of such discriminatory attitudes on non-Europeans, and the son’s agony is partly the consequence of such attitudes. There seems to be a tendency amongst the European societies to blame the ‘other’ for their unhappiness and shortcomings. 

Albeit the growing tension between European nationalists and migrants, there are still optimistic scholars debating the future of cultural diversity in Europe. For instance, in her approach to the idea of cultural diversity in Europe, Saskia Sassen writes:

There is only one enlightened road to take for Europe today: that is to work with settled immigrants and refugees toward their full integration, and to do so through frameworks that ensure cultural and religious diversity will be part of civil society, that is, part of what binds us rather than what segregates us. (133)

Sassen emphasises the importance of cultural diversity as a legacy that can bring different groups in Europe together. She believes that cultural diversity may allow various groups to participate in the construction of a European society based on the idea of equality. She underscores how elements that unite communities should be the basis for such a model of integration, stressing integration as a reciprocal process. Indeed, current Dutch cuisine, for example, is a simple case of a cultural element that unites communities. It is a package that includes a variety of recipes in which both ‘migrants’ and ‘locals’ are involved. This kind

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29 Recent public opinion polls conducted in France and Germany show that almost half those polled are unsympathetic to migrants from North African origins (Fetzer 110-24).
30 Regarding the issue of migration and the resurrection of the ‘other’, see Ponzanesi and Merolla’s introduction to their anthology (1-9).
of integration is a complex process that requires an open attitude from ‘host and guest’ alike. In effect, the experience of migration does not stop with the end of a migrant’s transit from one location to another, but is a dynamic process that can last forever.

**Space and Migration**

Migration is an open-ended journey. In the 80s and 90s, numerous Amazigh migrants believed their resettlement in host countries would allow them to disconnect from the marker ‘migrant’. Nonetheless, a few are now realising that migration may have an origin but no simple end. They no longer conceive of their identities as belonging to one particular place, but belonging to a process in which migration constantly redefines their identities. The active process of migration affects subjects as much as subjects affect migratory practices. For today’s audience, ‘Come Back My Son’ emphasises the metaphoric meaning of migration as a journey, which, on the one hand, embodies the dream of a better life of migrants escaping the hardship of their homelands, and, on the other hand, sustains the fear of an irretrievable loss of cultural identity as their image of homeland increasingly blurs. In addition, the song reveals an important idea to many Imazighen: that the only way to dispose of the marker ‘migrant’ is to return to the homeland. Singer Elwalid Mimoun highlights this belief and says, ‘There is always the hope and dream of return to the motherland’ (Interview). In fact, the singer’s use of the term ‘dream’ is significant, since it reflects the nature of this transnational Amazigh identity created through cultural products of collective imagination. That is, as mentioned before, migration might have a beginning but no end, since it is a process that subjects cannot easily exit. Therefore, the idea that an Amazigh diasporan can simply dispose of his or her migrant’s identity remains not only a dream but also an illusion. Still, many Imazighen hope to return to their homeland and escape hostilities in Europe and discard the label migrant’. Regarding the attachment of diasporas to places of origin, Appadurai argues that diasporic collectivity retains a special link to a putative place of origin (*Modernity* 172). Indeed, in the case of the Amazigh diaspora, the constructed homeland is not the Rif as a territory, but as a space partly shaped by diasporans’ own experiences and representations. The son in ‘Come Back My Son’ is obviously affected by the journey of migration and the melancholic tone that dominates the whole song reflects his state of mind.

The character of the son seems to live in a dilemma that torments him evermore. In fact, I see the overall negativity that characterises the lyrics of this song as a sign of a
struggle within Amazigh migrants. The son is at a point at which he cannot or does not understand the journey of migration. He is fixed in a phase dominated by confusion and uncertainty. Arjun Appadurai attributes the uncertainty in the world of migrants to the confrontation of migrants with images outside the nation-state. On this issue he writes, ‘Both persons and images often meet unpredictably, outside the certainties of home and the cordon sanitaire of local and national media effects’ (Modernity 4). Appadurai sees national media as an umbrella that usually provides certainty for subjects; therefore, as they exit this umbrella and the nation-state and become an imagined community they face all kinds of images that contribute to their uncertainty. Uncertainty is that which the son struggles against in Elwalid’s song. He seems unable to realise that the experience of migration has become part of his own identity and starts to internalise it. His distress seems obvious as he lives in a deadlock, and his movements are restricted to walking from one bar to another. It is a phase that many immigrants experience, especially when they are neither capable of returning to their homeland, nor able to enjoy their livelihoods in the host country. Extracts taken from the song ‘Quiero Estar Con Mi Familia’ (‘I Want To Be With My Family’), performed by La Banda Loca, whose members currently live in New York, emphasise the idea of being caught in the journey:

Cuanto diera por estar
reunido con los mios
pero no puedo salir
de aqui donde estoy metido. (La Banda Loca, “Quiero”)

How much would I give to be there
reunited with my family
but I cannot get out
of this place where I am stuck. (my trans.)

Typically, the idea of being fixed refers first to the inability of a person to move between places, but, importantly, also to the difficulty of understanding the experience of migration
or the journey. That is to say, it may be easy to physically travel and visit relatives or places, but it is difficult to comprehend the position or function of a migrant within the complex process of migration.

The journey of migration as an active process affects the livelihood of Amazigh migrants. In Elwalid’s song, the character of the son is on a quest to rediscover and explore his self-identity. As mentioned before, the unclear source of his distress confuses the son. There are various possible causes to his distress, but it is not clear which one of them is the generative source. The complexity of contemporary migration cannot be solely grasped in terms of causes and consequences. Rather, migration and its relationship with space contributes to the transformations that occur in the livelihood of migrants. In *The Turbulence of Migration*, Nikos Papastergiadis writes, ‘It is important to acknowledge the transformative effect of the journey, and in general recognize that space is a dynamic field in which identities are in a constant state of interaction’ (4). Here, Papastergiadis accentuates the fluidity of the experience of migration and argues that perceptual changes are formed throughout and because of movement. The case of the son in the song reflects the transformations that occur in subjects as they enter the journey’s experiences. The son can neither comprehend his status nor the implications of migration on his own existence.

It is important to note that Elwalid Mimoun migrated to Europe after the release of the song ‘Come Back My Son’. Migration is indeed a process in which numerous Imazighen become entangled long before they actually relocate from their village or town. Elwalid, through his song, portrays the livelihood of diasporic Imazighen as if he is living among them; and similar to many potential Amazigh migrants, he became involved in the process of migration before he physically moved to Europe. The case of this singer is significant, as it highlights the knowledge that local people gather regarding their compatriots living in Amazigh diaspora. His knowledge of the livelihood of diasporic Imazighen, especially of migrants living in Germany, is based solely on his interactions with Amazigh diasporans. For instance, Elwalid’s account of identity problems of Amazigh migrants shows that Amazigh artists in their homeland are well aware of the details of the lives of their compatriots living elsewhere. In his comments on the role of the artist, Elwalid agrees with the image of an artist as the link between what is local and global (Interview). These words indicate the capability of an Amazigh artist to process what is happening in his immediate surroundings and the data about the condition of his compatriots in Europe and imprint it in his artworks.
In effect, the heterogeneity of the Amazigh community can be a model host countries could follow. Imazighen are composed of various groups who speak various dialects, with different religious backgrounds, and live in places scattered all along North Africa. In addition, Imazighen include dark-skinned and white people (Dahraoui 58). Hence, the idea of a homogenous Europe has become a concern for diasporic Imazighen. European Imazighen see themselves as marginalised both in a host country and their homeland. That is, the Arab-nationalists in North Africa advocate a homogenous Arab Maghreb. Likewise, many European leaders openly express their desire to have a homogenous Europe. Diasporic Amazigh artists, through their artefacts, try to establish a model for dynamic and porous communities. ‘Come Back My Son’ highlights the dream of many Imazighen to pluralise Europe and create spaces in which various cultures can interact and cohabit.

Socio-economic and political condition of Imazighen of the Rif

Certainly the dire socio-economic and political condition in the Rif area has contributed to the agony of the son in ‘Come Back My Son’. The singer Elwalid states that the implicit desire of the son in the song is to return to the Rif because he does not feel accepted in his host society, but the socio-economic and political condition in the Rif region hinders the fulfilment of his aspiration (Interview). ‘Come Back My Son’ depicts a severe socio-economic and political condition of Imazighen in the Rif area.

The socio-economic condition of Imazighen in the Rif

The homeland is represented in the song ‘Come Back My Son’ in a way that it frightens migrants who want to return. In the second and third lines of the first stanza, the singer describes an alarming condition for Riffians in Morocco as he sings: ‘I saw misery in my land, I saw suffering and hardship’. The two lines summarise the socio-economic condition of Imazighen during the 80s, but they are still applicable to the Rif today. Regarding the socio-economic condition of young graduates in the Rif region in his song ‘My Dear Father’ (1998) the revolutionary singer Allal Chilah sings:
Dear father, where is my educated brother?

The father responds: dear son, he is wandering the streets and begging for money to buy hashish.

The son asks again: Dear father where is my educated sister?

The father responds: dear son, they closed doors on her, she is crying day and night. (my trans.)

The song is a dialogue between a son and his father, and these verses describe the condition of young university graduates who cannot find a job or lead a decent life in the Rif area. These verses show the condition of graduates and allow the audience to imagine a worse condition for the uneducated. While there have been a few positive developments recently, they remain limited and the general standards of living in the Rif are low. Both ‘My Dear Father’ and ‘Come Back My Son’ depict the country of origin as the land of poverty, unemployment, and hardship. These images highlight the position of uncertain migrants, who hear such gloomy images in songs, and can hardly contemplate the idea of returning to a place of hardship and suffering. I sense these songs reach and affect Amazigh diasporans who become aware of the condition of their compatriots living either in the country of origin or in diaspora. Regarding the role of media in the decision to move between countries or return to the homeland, Appadurai writes, ‘For migrants, both the politics of adaption to a new environment and the stimulus to move or return are deeply affected by mass-mediated imaginary that frequently transcends national space’ (Modernity 6). Here, Appadurai emphasises the idea that subjects and groups formulate their plans and ideas regarding immigration or return in the light of the media they consume and interact with. If this insight is applied to Amazigh media, one could claim that artefacts, like songs, play a crucial role since they inform and are informed by groups regarding the conditions of their compatriots, and therefore, affect their ideas, decisions, and plans.

Media, and the interaction between Riffian Amazigh diasporans and inhabitants of the Rif region, are important in highlighting the social and economic conditions in the Moroccan Rif. The majority of the first and second generation of Riffians, who live in Europe, can easily identify with the character of the son in ‘Come Back My Son’ and recognise his sufferings because they witnessed it in Morocco. The third and fourth
generations of Amazigh migrants learn about the sufferings in Morocco through their direct contact with relatives during summer holiday as well as through media. For instance, under the section of general topics in the website amazigh.nl, a participant under the username ‘Amsraraf’ posted in February 2010 a film entitled Poverty in Rif. The film shows the miserable condition of a family who lives in the Rif region. Another user, ‘Hadou’, commented on the film four days later, writing, ‘Almakhzan does not care about them [family]’. From the circulation and citation of stories on the Internet about the awful socio-economic conditions of many families in the Rif area, one may deduce that a young generation of Imazighen in diaspora are well aware of the conditions of locals in the Rif region. In ‘Come Back My Son’, the main character describes his livelihood in the Rif in terms of misery, suffering, and hardship. This grim condition not only adds to the uncertainty in which he is engulfed, but also epitomises the socio-economic state of potential Amazigh migrants in Northern Morocco.

In addition to migration, traditional fishing and agriculture are the two bases of an underdeveloped Riffian economy. Given that the Moroccan government has hardly invested in the Rif during the last century, the amount of unemployment in the region is high. Traditional farming predominates in the whole region. The lack of sophisticated agricultural methods, enduring draught, and arid mountains that characterise the Rif area have seriously affected farming production. The harvest gathered in the region is substantially low in comparison with other Moroccan regions. Likewise, fishing is still practiced in an old fashion that relies on small, wooden boats. Further, fishing currently faces other contemporary problems, such as declining fishing stocks from illegal catches and excessive by-catches of juvenile fish.\textsuperscript{31}

The social and economic conditions in the Rif are closely interrelated. In effect, Riffian migrants have build houses and started private enterprises in their country of origin and these investments have contributed to a strong bond between migrants and their compatriots in the Rif region. It is important to note that migrants’ projects in the Rif provide the local residents with job opportunities. Hence, migrants are usually praised and respected by local residents. Sometimes international migrants are praised and envied at the same time. In his article in Migrantenstudies, Ruud Strijp argues that in the Rif, migrants and their household members are praised but also vilified. Even if the locals consider

\textsuperscript{31} For more information on the local economy of the Rif region, see the official site of the Moroccan High Commission for Planning (www.hcp.ma/).
Amazigh diasporans as ‘Sḥab Elxarij’ (‘Riffians coming from abroad/foreign Riffians’), they still tend to envy them for their material possessions regarded as status symbols. In ‘Come Back My Son’, the character of the son refuses to return to the Rif partly out of fear that locals might interpret his return as weakness and failure.\textsuperscript{32} Elwalid sings: ‘Oh mother! Reckon me a loser’. The son is aware he has not yet been able to achieve anything in Europe, and does not want to return empty handed to his homeland where he might be belittled.

The imagery of being torn between two worlds and the implications of this impasse on identity is reflected in many works that address migration. In Karim Traïdia’s film \textit{De Onmacht} (\textit{The Impotence}, 1991), for instance, the main character Ahmed, a North African migrant who lives and works in Paris, becomes impotent and cannot return to his homeland. In their analysis of this film, Patricia Pisters and Kaouthar Darmouni argue that Ahmed represents the North African immigrant who arrived in Europe in the 70’s and led a miserable lonely life, dreaming about his homeland where sun is always shining ("Migrantenfilm"). Both Ahmed in \textit{De Onmacht} and the son in ‘Come Back My Son’ become ‘impotent’ and live in miserable conditions in Europe. While the former cannot return to North Africa because he cannot face his relatives and reveal his secret of being sexually impotent, the latter is impotent and passive because he cannot decide and act. In effect, neither Germany nor Morocco are depicted as ideal settings in ‘Come Back My Son’, and the son cannot select one of the two places to live in. That is, the son is confronted with a dilemma without a solution, which considerably impacts his identity.

Despite the economic distress during the 80s in the homeland, ‘Come Back My Son’ does not portray Europe as paradise. There is no sign of leisure or wealth in the whole song, and the singer describes Germany as a place of estrangement. The disassociation of Europe from material wealth in the song suggests that the idea of wealth is, after all, not the ultimate goal of all Riffian migrants. Nevertheless, a healthy economy, according to many Amazigh migrants, is an undeniably important factor in the selection of a possible host country. Ignoring the idea of a wealthy Europe in ‘Come Back My Son’ raises the question of whether there are other motivations behind the Amazigh exodus from Morocco.

\textsuperscript{32} It is important to note that illegal immigrants caught by police in host countries and sent back to Morocco feel ashamed, and this point will be discussed later in chapter 4.
Examining the song in light of the political conditions of Imazighen in the Rif region is constructive. The song was recorded in the 80s, a period known for several unrests in Morocco, particularly in the Rif region. There were several protests organized by students and teachers, demanding a better socio-economic condition for the Riffian population. The growing unrest involved primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, and the Moroccan government responded by dismissing many teachers from their jobs, many university students from various faculties, and arresting an unknown number of protesters (Iskander 112-13). Elwalid Mimoun, who was a university student at the time, was among the victims of the ruling system in Morocco and was arrested after participating in a protest at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University. Moroccans were dismayed, and Imazighen in the Rif area were affected by the brutality of the Moroccan regime. Specifically, protests in the Rif region are usually handled by the Moroccan regime with a disproportionate show of force for fear that a peaceful protest might develop into a rebellion that may topple the regime.

In the first line of the second stanza, the son describes the mood in the Rif during the 80s and sings: ‘Oh mother! I cannot return to the graveyard’. The use of the word ‘graveyard’ to describe life in the Rif is telling. The song marks the place as a graveyard by implicitly referring to the ruling system that has made the Rif a graveyard. It is important to note that Elwalid’s first album *Ajjaj*, which includes ‘Come Back My Son’, was seen by the Moroccan regime as inciting mass disobedience in the Moroccan kingdom and was initially banned. Given that the Moroccan regime imposed unannounced sanctions on the Rif, many artists started to flee the Rif region. Khalid Izri, Elwalid Mimoun, Thifridjas, and Ayawen are few examples of the musical bands that immigrated to Europe. When I asked Elwalid about his decision to migrate and his current assessment of Morocco, he responded, ‘It was not my decision to immigrate. It *[Almakhzan]* forced me and other Imazighen to leave the country. *Almakhzan* isolated our region and persecuted us’ (Interview). The idea of being forced to immigrate is also obvious in ‘Come Back My Son’. The line ‘the departure from my homeland (entered in my bones) broke my heart’, as indicated above, portrays the moment of departure from the homeland as a tragic experience.

The son’s response to the request of the mother in ‘Come Back My Son’ is vague and hesitant. The mother calls her son, ‘come back to your land to fight alongside your
brothers; come back my son to fight for your share’. The call of the mother symbolises the
call of the land to Amazigh migrants who have left to return to the Rif and fight alongside
the locals against corruption and tyranny. Nonetheless, the son is seemingly overwhelmed
by other problems in his host country. He seems fixed and bewildered, since he can neither
solve his problems in Europe nor is he capable of returning to Morocco to help his
compatriots. However, Elwalid Mimoun, like many Amazigh migrants, believes that
migration is a journey that can be used in the struggle for Amazighness and might
eventually take Imazighen back to their homeland (Interview). In fact, Almakhzan regards
the struggles of many Amazigh activists in Morocco as a threat to the country’s national
security. Elements such as Arab-nationalists, accuse both Amazigh cultural movements
and artists for stirring division within Moroccan society. Appadurai argues that a nation-
state makes use of force and fear of exterior homogenization to impose its own
homogenization on its minorities (Modernity 32). In Morocco, Arab-nationalists, in order to
impose Arab culture, spread fear by equating pluralism in Morocco with anarchy. That is,
Arab-nationalists depict pluralism as a doomsday scenario that may lead to the division of
the country and in which various groups will clash with one another and provoke anarchy.

There are Amazigh artists who strongly believe that the settlement of Imazighen in
Europe is temporary, and that they might one day return to their homeland. They usually
depict an Amazigh diasporan as someone with a mission to fulfil; Elwalid, in the song ‘I
Left My Land’, sings:

I wish I could leave foreign countries,

To return to my land with my head high in the sky,

To a sunny place, where the sky is blue. (“I Left”)

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33 The Moroccan regime sent many Amazigh activists belonging to the 20th February
Movement in the Rif region to prison in 2012. This movement is the Moroccan iteration of
other movements that rallied against dictatorships and oppression in the Arab world in the
spring of 2012.

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These lines describe the experience of migration as a momentary transfer. They clearly depict migration as a journey that may eventually draw to a close with the return of Imazighen to Morocco, where there are no clouds of corruption, exclusion, and subjugation. As mentioned before, the idea of return is not only an illusion but a fantasy that keeps many Imazighen dreaming in their uncertain world of migration.\footnote{In my interview with Elwalid Mimoun, he mentioned that the idea of return of Imazighen to the Rif region is a dream.}

The lines ‘come back to your land to fight alongside your brothers’ (in ‘Come Back My Son’) and ‘To a sunny place, where the sky is blue’ (in ‘I Left My Land’) are important in creating ideas about a community that might return. In effect, songs-as-media constitute the basic material for a collective imagination that may raise resistance against oppression and homogenization clouding the skies of the homeland. It is in this journey of migration that imagined communities not only struggle to escape the uncertainty in which they are caught, but also through imagination they create togetherness or ‘brotherhood’ that may allow them to ‘return high headed’ to the homeland. Appadurai writes, ‘It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule … the imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape’ (\textit{Modernity} 7). Appadurai alludes to the various roles that collective imagination plays as far as creating ideas, escaping uncertainty, and struggles for the well being of community are concerned. Indeed, for migrants, imagination reflected in media like songs constitute the field in which ideas are generated and brotherhood and nationhood are constituted. It is not a blood-brotherhood but an images-brotherhood.

\textit{The music of ‘Come Back My Son’}

Elwalid uses the music in ‘Come Back My Son’ to draw attention to the unhappiness of the son who represents a large category of diasporic Imazighen who are fixed in-between two different worlds. As explained before, the son is unhappy because he cannot settle in his host country. He is also tormented by the call of the homeland, since he can neither return nor lend a hand to his compatriots who live in seclusion and distress in the Rif. The tempo of the music is slow, and Amazigh singers usually use this tempo to emphasise sameness and slow development of events. The pace of events in the son’s worlds corresponds to the
tempo of the song. That is, on the one hand, the son is distressed by his condition in the host country, and, one the other hand, he cannot return to Morocco where the struggle of his compatriots for the improvement of socio-economic and political condition of the Imazighen is slowly evolving.

Music is an intrinsic material that addresses emotions of the audience and, therefore, can overcome language barriers. In *Music and Meaning*, Jenefer Robinson argues that music is not just ‘structures of sound’ but can express thoughts and feelings that may be of profound human significance when attention is paid to the historical context in which a piece of music is composed and listened to (3). The song ‘Come Back My Son’ is performed in Tarifit, an Amazigh variant understood by a limited audience (namely the inhabitants of northern Morocco). Hence, various Amazigh factions in southern Morocco or Algeria and non-Amazigh speakers do not understand the lyrics of the song.

However, music as a medium can transmit messages to audiences who cannot understand Tarifit. Although these audiences cannot comprehend the exact themes discussed in the verses of the song, they can at least identify whether the tone of a song is joyful or not. Consequently, it is not difficult to see that a melancholic tone indicates that a song revolves around a negative or unenthusiastic experience. Conversely, a cheerful tone points to the fact that a song celebrates something pleasurable. In fact, the melancholic tone in ‘Come Back My Son’ allows the listener to recognise that something is wrong in the livelihood of Riffians. Importantly, for various audiences the melancholic tone might become a puzzle that raises many questions. This puzzle not only allows the listener to use his or her imagination to try to decipher the content of the lyrics, but can also motivate him or her to explore Amazigh culture.

The use of three musical instruments in ‘Come Back My Son’ may have different interpretations. A flute, a tambour, and a flamenco guitar are the three instruments used. The first two instruments are usually fabricated in the Rif region: the flute is made of a local variety of bamboo plant called ɣanim, and the tambour is made of a circular wooden frame and a cow or sheep hide. The flamenco guitar is an instrument imported from the Spanish enclave of Melilla, meters away from the birthplace of Elwalid Mimoun. One of the reasons that may explain the use of three instruments in the song may lie in the time of

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35 To learn more about the use of instruments, such as the Spanish guitar in Amazigh songs, see Dahraoui.
the song’s composition. The song was recorded in the 80s, a period known for economic distress in the Rif region, and Elwalid and his Riffian companions were poor and could hardly afford a large set of musical instruments. It is interesting to note that Elwalid and the other members of his band did not attend any musical academy, having self-taught their musical techniques. Elwalid acknowledges the difficulty an artist undergoes to master a musical instrument without any help (Interview). That the music of ‘Come Back My Son’ is made only with three instruments is also due to the scarcity of talented artists able to play on various musical instruments. In Elwalid’s response to a question I posed regarding the music that affected his style he states, ‘I used to listen to Amazigh folk music and western music. But what affected my early career is Riffian folk music’ (Interview). Elwalid, like the band Twattoun in the Rif region and the singer Idir in Kabylie, is among the first Amazigh singers who started to combine local musical instruments with other instruments to create new styles, tones, and songs. These artists use Amazigh folk music as a basis to create something innovative. It is one of the reasons that these artists use instruments like the local tambour (Bendir) and flutes in combination with other instruments in their songs. Currently, the majority of revolutionary singers adopt a similar rule, since they combine local knowledge about music with the global to create new styles and sounds. Here, the nature of Amazigh music reflects a transnational Amazigh identity in which the local interact with the global.

Conclusion

Understanding the causes and consequences of Amazigh migration is intricate, if not impossible. Nonetheless, the song ‘Come Back My Son’ highlights a few aspects of the experience of migration. In effect, there are several places Imazighen have migrated, and the song ‘Come Back My Son’ reflects one of these destinations (Europe). Before Riffians began to travel to Europe, they had migrated within the borders of Morocco (internal migration) as well as migrating to neighboring Algeria. After the Second World War and the 1958-59 Rif rebellion, Riffians massively migrated to the European continent. Even today, migration of Imazighen to Europe is still active, although it does not match previous levels. The European Union now tries to strictly limit immigration from outside of Europe.

The causes and consequences of Amazigh migration are not always clear. Causes can vary between economic, social, and political reasons, or just movement for the sake of movement itself. Likewise, the consequences of migration are diverse and difficult to
delineate. Migration can have positive effects for Amazigh migrants, such as economic benefits and freedom of speech. Yet, it can be disastrous for Amazigh identity and culture, and ‘Come Back My Son’ underscores the side effects of this journeying.

Importantly, contemporary migration proves to be more than movement between places. It is a process that involves places and space and it is affected by images of homeland. Migration, as the song highlights, is an experience people can explore and be involved in without moving from their location. In addition, migration, in light of the flux of cultures, is a process that can create uncertainty and confusion.

This chapter addresses Imazighen migration from the Rif and the way migrants’ songs reflect this journey, its lasting uncertainty, and its efforts to sustain identity. Through the song ‘Come Back My Son’, I highlight the roles many Amazigh songs play in creating and maintaining a ‘community of sentiments’. These songs reflect Imazighen feelings of uncertainty as they try to articulate their identity in diaspora. I argue the songs play a crucial role in identity construction despite the uncertainty created within a host society, globalization, and the journey of migration itself.

The confusion of the son in ‘Come Back My Son’ not only represents the general effects of the journey for Amazigh migrants but also involves a number of factors that add uncertainty to already confused migrants. For instance, the idea of being stuck in the journey is experienced by many migratory groups throughout the world, and numerous migration researchers regard it as a classic aspect of migration. Nevertheless, the current boost of anti-immigration sentiments throughout Europe has pushed migrants, including diasporic Imazighen, to question their own existence in host countries and their future prospects.